

## MINUTES

### MANSFIELD ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

Wednesday, April 4, 2007

Mansfield Library, Buchanan Center

Retreat - 5:00PM-8:00 PM

PRESENT: K. Grunwald (staff), J. Buck (Chair), S. Baxter (staff), R. Leclerc (staff), N. Hovorka, J. Goldman, S. Daley, K. Paulhus, J. Stoughton, L. Oransoff, A. Bladen, Jessica Bonafine (CT Alliance for Children)

- I. INTRODUCTIONS/MINUTES: Did not approve 2/7/07 Minutes at this meeting.
- II. COMMUNICATIONS (Consent agenda unless otherwise noted):  
Chronicle Letter to the Editor by Joan Buck  
Courant article: "New Education Chief Backs Exit Exam, Tighter Standards"
- III. NEW BUSINESS

- A. MAC Retreat on 4/4/07 – Graustein liaison Paul Vivian was retreat leader. At the beginning we invited Jessica Bonafine from the CT Alliance for Children to speak about Advocacy work. She described their newly published "Advocacy Tool Kit" and recommended our group make personal contact with Rep. Denise Merrill (Co Chair of the Appropriations Committee) to encourage her committee to maintain the \$65Million to support early care and ed. initiatives of quality early childcare and support for families to send their children to quality early care and education centers.  
Members gave their definitions of 'retreat' and hobbies or interests other than their work in early care and education. We have a talented and diverse group with hobbies that transfer to how to be successful in the work ahead.  
Sandy led the group through the timeline (submitted in last month's MAC packet.  
Members were asked to give details about their vision for the future of MAC's work around early care and education. They are as follows:
  1. Form sub-groups of MAC to take on specific tasks. Mac should sustain its vision and take on new challenges. Make structural changes to accomplish this and have these small work groups report to MAC committee at large meetings.

2. Continue to expand, build, and increase membership; focus on projects and tasks short-term.
3. Self-assessment tool to measure and report on progress.
4. Address the needs of families regarding childcare and other services.
5. Would like to see what happens at MAC branch out to other parts of the State; see our advocacy go to the State level with other towns.
6. Main task should be to address family needs and increase positions (spaces and funding) for childcare. UCONN Provost Council on Childcare did assess this.
7. Small sub committees suggested: Membership, Outreach, Parent Engagement, Data Collection, Publications, Publicity, School Readiness. It was noted that since we are not a large group, members may have to serve on more than one sub committee. Sub committees would work independently and then report out at the larger MAC meetings.

Members were asked to prioritize the role of MAC in Mansfield. The following ideas were generated:

1. Strengthen mutual connections with local government (Town Council) and Board of Ed. Need to do more outreach to these groups. Joan said we need more local connectios with the BOE to create more awareness and interest in our work, and to do more resource sharing.
2. Address the needs of families regarding childcare and other services: identify, connect and refer (Special Ed, Infant/Toddler). Activities/events should be inclusive of all children.
3. Small groups should work on: Parenting, Outreach, and Data Collection.
4. Increase public awareness, connections with community groups, form partnerships through publicity, outreach and membership sub committees.
5. Strengthen and support parent leadership and engagement.

Members were asked how we might be State-wide advocates. The following ideas were generated:

1. Collaborate with other towns/communities
2. Ensure that there is a commitment at the local government and public school level regarding Early Care and Ed. needs and resources.
3. Focus on Early Childhood teachers; MAC could become the "voice" regarding the need for qualified and trained staff. Susan said that NAEYC wants more tachers and programs to meet their criteria for quality. MAC should

be the voice to make the connections between well-trained people and pay equity. Professional development is needed to get workers professional levels of pay.

4. Identify where the resources are to take on more responsibility. We should be the “Hub” of awareness of pertinent early care and ed. issues like early care for parents and children with special needs. Our role can be to network for these issues.
5. Address Infant/Toddler care needs in Mansfield. Jane made the point that this is already on our Action Plan for the year 2007 and we must begin work on this action now in order to make necessary achievements and lead the way for our work in 2008-09.

Paul asked the group “What is the meaning of being a member of MAC?” Responses were:

1. Rachel said that we are advocates for young children, early education and early care.
2. Kevin said that this group has the official sanction of being appointed by Town Council and the Mayor. It is more than an informal group of people getting together. That sanction carries the weight of power that should be used for young children.
3. Judy said that we bring together people for young children. We reach broadly into the community and work with diverse groups.

- B. Month of the Young Child – First year of events: This was a very good beginning of MOYC celebration. We managed to offer a nice variety of activities and events. We got Children’s art for three displays from Community Children’s Center, Mansfield Discovery Depot, Mt. Hope Montessori, Tia Fricano-Forever Friends, and Willow House. Thank you!
- The Mansfield Community Center offered a sampling of classes for free just the first week of April. We learned that we needed more advance publicity for these classes as MCC would only run the class if there were at least 6 children pre-registered and since this took place the first week of the month, people were not well informed enough.
- Two of our Nature events were rained out. The Senior Center event was a great success with many attendees and lots of smiles from everyone (see photos). Four centers were available for the Open House: CCC, MDD, WH, and Oak Grove Montessori on April 28<sup>th</sup>.
- We received assistance from the Leo Club at EO Smith High School.

The packets that were handed out by volunteers were another way that we used this opportunity for outreach and publicity. I hope I have not missed thanking anyone who did help.

IV. PROGRAM UPDATES:

- A. School Readiness Update: All 16 spaces are full and we have a waiting list of about 9 families. Please check with Sandy for S.R. flyers in 4 languages to distribute in your work areas.
- B. Discovery – We submitted and received the Graustein Incentive grant in full for the amount of \$9,091, for 2007. These funds are to be used for consultants, meetings such as materials, childcare, site and food and any parenting programs we may plan as well as MAC publications.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Month of the Young Child: See update above

VII NEXT MEETING: June 6, 2007

Respectfully submitted by: Sandy Baxter, April 16, 2007